KENTUCKY FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSIONER'S NEWSLETTER

September 2008

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Nature's extreme makeovers
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KDFWR conservation officers assist hurricane-stricken New Orleans again

Hurricane Gustav still was just a mere tropical storm packing 55 mile-per-hour winds over Jamaica when the request for assistance came in to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife's Division of Law Enforcement Friday morning, August 29.

Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Boating Law Administrator Major Ron Morris's voice greeted Kentucky's Lt. Mike Fields, "I got the gator, you bring the opossum," drawled the Louisiana officer to his counterpart. But the conversation quickly turned far more serious. Gustav was growing to hurricane strength and aiming itself squarely at New Orleans.

"What are you doing?" answered Fields.

"Go stand by your fax machine and I'll show you what I'm doing," said Morris.

Immediately, an EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Compact) official request for help appeared. Louisiana needed 200 fully-equipped maritime armed law enforcement officers with boats and 4-wheel drive vehicles by 6:30 a.m. eastern time, September 3, in Baton Rouge.

It was almost three years ago to the day when a similar call came in from a flood-ravaged and crime-ridden New Orleans desperate for law enforcement officers skilled in working from boats, and Louisiana officials intended to be ready for this one. Nearly two dozen Kentucky conservation officers responded to that 2005 call and rescued hundreds of stranded persons in the flooded city.

Captain Doc Hodges provides a briefing in preparation for the Hurricane Gustav mission. *Mark Marraccini photo*

Gustav gained strength as it traveled over the Gulf of Mexico and bore down on the vulnerable city. Morris called again and asked Fields to speed up and get help there a day sooner than the original request.

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Conservation Officer Butch Davis

The Law Enforcement Division lost a 20-year career officer on September 2, 2008.

Third District Conservation Officer Ralph "Butch" Davis passed away unexpectedly from a brain hemorrhage in Louisville at Baptist Hospital East.

Officer Davis began his career as a water patrol officer in August 1988, working the 3rd Water Patrol Region. He patrolled Taylorsville Lake for many years before transferring and patrolling the Ohio River Louisville Pool. He joined the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife in April 1994.

Officer Davis was the type that never met a person that he didn't befriend and will be missed by many.

Funeral services were conducted September 5, 2008 at Our Lady of Lourdes in Louisville, KY.

He was born January 3, 1959 to John and Doris (Seidl) Davis. Butch was a graduate of St. X High School in 1978 and played on their 1975 championship football team.

A 20-year veteran of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, where he served as a water patrol officer and state conservation officer for Jefferson Co. patrolling the Ohio River, Taylorsville Lake, and Rough River Lake.

Butch was active in local politics. He was preceded in death by his father, John Joseph Davis; and brother, Jimmy Davis.

He is survived by his loving wife, the former Janice Coleman Davis; mother, Doris (Seidl) Davis; sons, Adam and Brandon Davis; daughter, Laura Davis; stepson, Lance Laslie and stepdaughter, Laura-Ellen Davidson; two grandchildren, Allison Laslie and Zachary Laslie; two brothers, John Davis Jr. and Robert Davis (Linda); a sister, Joy Davis Biernesser (Jim); and several aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.


Officer Butch Davis

"Gustav," continued

Major David Casey left early Sunday morning and was in Baton Rouge doing advance work when Gustav's winds and rains pounded the state. "It's heavy rain – and I really mean heavy – and it's been blowing sideways for two hours now," he said by phone Monday while another 25 of his fellow Kentucky conservation officers in 12 vehicles and towing 10 boats were driving south through Mississippi toward the storm.

They staged up in Baton Rouge Monday night and awaited their search and rescue assignments.

"The quick, professional response and rescue efforts in New Orleans by Kentucky conservation officers during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina three years ago were documented thoroughly by network news organizations and broadcast nationwide," said Governor Steve Beshear. "This time when the call came for help, they were among the nation's first to respond. Kentucky is proud to be a member of EMAC, and we stand prepared to help whenever we can."

"We sent 26 officers with vehicles and equipment," said Fields. "We could have sent more, but we still had a mission here. It was the Labor Day holiday weekend, a traditionally big recreational boating weekend, and the opening weekend of mourning dove hunting season. We had them all adequately covered."

The Kentucky officers were deployed to Belle Chasse in Plaquemines Parish on the southeast side of New Orleans after a request from the Louisiana governor indicated a need to evacuate stranded residents and a strong law enforcement presence to deter looting. Flooding in Belle Chasse topped levees and left lower lying areas under water with additional heavy rains still to come.

Plaquemines Parish was one of the hardest hit areas during Hurricane Katrina. Plaquemines is the parish with the most combined land and water area in Louisiana.

Louisiana's EMAC request for maritime law enforcement assistance also went out to Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Arkansas, Ohio, Missouri and Georgia.

HURRICANE IKE

Gustav's destruction was still fresh when Law Enforcement Division again went on alert after receiving another EMAC request from Louisiana Friday, September 12, with Hurricane Ike approaching its coastline.

Division officials assembled another search and rescue team and staged them in Frankfort and at Barren River State Park as Louisiana officials assessed damage and its needs in the southwestern area of the state near the Texas state line. But the call to stand down came from Louisiana about 12 hours before their scheduled departure.

Fisheries Division holds workshop to help establish aquatic plants for fisheries habitat

Dr. Michael Smart, LeeAnn Glomski, Julie Nachtrieb, Chetta Owens, and Lynde Williams (all researchers with the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Centers Aquatic Plant Control Research Program) presented a continuing education workshop on the role that native aquatic vegetation plays in providing water quality, fisheries habitat, and protection against aquatic vegetation species at the recent Fisheries Division Staff Meeting.

The value of native aquatic plants to water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and as a deterrent to invasive species has only been appreciated within the past 20 years.

Prior to this time, and still somewhat today, aquatic plant management projects have been more concerned with removal or eradication of the offending species than with ensuring the continuance of a diverse and stable aquatic plant community. In fact, the goal of management was often the complete elimination of aquatic vegetation.

Unfortunately, this approach is not only flawed from a weed management perspective, it is also fraught with other dangers including degradation of water quality, loss of fish habitat, increased shoreline erosion, and an increased likelihood of supporting excessive growth of filamentous algae and other plant species.

The objective of this continuing education workshop was to provide the Department's fisheries biologists with a framework for managing problematic growth of invasive aquatic plants within an ecological context.

The workshop encompassed not only the control of invasive aquatic plant species using the latest advances in chemical and biological control technologies, but also the factors that contribute to the

See "Workshop," page 4

Biologists fabricating a metal exclosure to protect plants from depredation.

Series of submersed aquatic plant species planted at Guist Creek and protected with metal exclosures.

September appointments and retirements

Greg Logan started the first of September as a Highway Equipment Operator I in the Engineering Division's Boat Ramp Construction and Maintenance Section.

Mr. Logan previously worked for us from 2002-2004. He brings with him 10+ years of heavy equipment operating experience and a commercial driver's license (CDL).

Brent McCarty began working with Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources as a Conservation Education Program Leader at the Salato Wildlife Education Center in April.

Brent joined the information center team this September. He earned a bachelor's of science in wildlife management from Eastern Kentucky University. Brent worked with birds of prey in college and was an active member of the Wildlife Society.

Brent is a newlywed and lives with his wife Holly in Lawrenceburg. Please welcome and congratulate Brent.

Jack Bell, Game Management Foreman at Peabody WMA, will be retiring October 1, 2008.

Jack started his FW career in 1988 as a Creel Clerk for the Fisheries Division at Rough River Lake. In 1989, he was hired as a seasonal wildlife technician in the Ramsey office. A full-time position opened up in the Fisheries Division in 1992, and Jack became a Fisheries Technician.

In 1997, Jack and Steve Nave, wildlife technician, swapped positions and Jack returned to the Wildlife Division as Wildlife Technician at Peabody WMA. He was promoted to Game Management Foreman at Peabody WMA in 2004.

The vast majority of the habitat work that has been accomplished at Peabody is a direct result of his commitment to the job. Jack's dedication and experience will be sorely missed.


Jack Bell

"Workshop," continued

development of the problem, and if not addressed could contribute to recurrences.

These factors include high levels of nutrient loading, frequent and pervasive disturbances creating empty niches, and a lack of native aquatic plant propagules that serve to revegetate and stabilize the ecosystem.

The workshop encompassed a whole day of lectures dealing with plant identification, biology, control techniques (mechanical, biological, and chemical), case history studies, and re-establishment techniques and methodologies.

The course concluded with a half-day field trip to Guist Creek Lake where re-establishment techniques were demonstrated using emergent (water willow), submerged (wild celery), and floating leaf (water lily, American pondweed, and Illinois pondweed) aquatic plants.


Biologists plant a mature water willow propagule inside an exclosure.

Todd County man sentenced to 6 months for poisoning dogs, hawks, owls and more

A Todd County man was sentenced to six months home incarceration after a joint Federal-State investigation, fined $50,000, and received five years probation in U.S. District Court, Bowling Green on August 20, for misdemeanor violations of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act and the National Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Donnie Halcomb, 56, of Allensville, pleaded guilty in April to charges that he laced deer carcasses with a deadly pesticide (carbofuran) to poison coyotes. The result was the poisoning of coyotes and dozens of other animals, including dogs, opossums and migratory bird such as owls, hawks and vultures.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Randy Ream and investigated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife conservation officers in the Second District.

"This sentence was a direct result of the hard work put forth by everyone on the search teams (almost the entire 2nd District) with locating and seizing evidence," wrote U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent Bob Snow in an email to Law Enforcement Division Director Col. Bob Milligan. "Every carcass located played a significant part; illustrating to the judge the seriousness of this offense. Collecting carcasses of animals which have been poisoned, or which have been used as "bait" is some of the most nasty work we do.

"In addition, officers also took the time to search through four-year-old tax documents at the residence after no Furadan was found on the farm," said Snow. "As a result of their diligence, a receipt

See "Poison," page 6

Terrestrial Nuisance Species plan is nearing completion

Kentucky's Terrestrial Nuisance Species (TNS) plan is nearing completion thanks to dedicated efforts by both KDFWR and University of Kentucky's Michael Mahala.

This plan represents proactive efforts to stop new introductions and prevent the spread of terrestrial nuisance species in Kentucky.

TNS are non-native species, such as kudzu, autumn olive, and feral hogs that threaten native species and ecosystems and that have the ability to disrupt or impair commercial, agricultural, and recreational activities in the Commonwealth.

Estimated damage and control costs of invasive species (both terrestrial and aquatic) in the U.S. amount to more than $138 billion annually. Consequently, preventative measures, such as creating and implementing TNS plans save money in the long-run.

Feral hogs leave a wide swath of destruction wherever they feed.

By addressing this important problem and implementing a plan to limit damages caused by TNS, the long-term well being of Kentucky's natural resources will be conserved.

The TNS plan is comprised of four main goals:

- Stop new introductions of TNS to Kentucky
- Prevent the spread of TNS currently in Kentucky and neighboring states
- Limit damages from TNS that cannot be eradicated
- Educate the public and stakeholders so they do not facilitate introductions and/or dispersal of new or existing TNS

To achieve these goals, KDFWR is planning a 2-day conference to coordinate and discuss targeted implementation of the TNS plan.

Specifically, there are three main objectives we hope to achieve in this first meeting: 1) an ambitious education campaign to inform the public about terrestrial nuisance species; 2) formation of a statewide task force responsible for oversight of TNS issues; 3) establishment of an early detection and rapid response (EDRR) protocol to identify and treat new infestations of TNS in Kentucky.

As soon as the TNS plan is finalized, it will be posted on the KDFWR website for all to reference.

Turkey brood update

By Steven Dobey

Turkey hen with poults.
Mark Marraccini photo

As summer comes to a close, turkey hunters certainly have something to be excited about. Preliminary data from the 2008 wild turkey summer brood survey indicate the highest reproductive success in several years.

While data from the survey are still being compiled, respondents from across the state have recorded large numbers of hens with poults, as well as high numbers of poults. Reasons for this success result from two likely factors that strongly influenced poult survival this spring and early summer.

Unlike 2007, we experienced warm temperatures this year with minimal rainfall during late spring when poults were still on the ground. That is a key component to early poult survival as young birds are very susceptible to hypothermia from even moderate temperatures if wet.

Secondly, the emergence of cicadas in the early summer provided a widespread, incredibly abundant and rich food source for developing poults. Collectively, those combined factors could yield the highest poult/hen ratio documented by the brood survey since 2002, which was the last year this estimate was greater than 3 poults/hen.

Data entry for the 2008 brood survey should be completed by the end of the month, and estimates for regional and statewide reproductive output will be available in early October.

If anyone still has brood survey forms, please send those to me and I will incorporate into this year's estimates.

Thanks to everyone for contributing! The data you provide allows us to continue a 25-year survey to monitor production and the overall status of wild turkeys in Kentucky.

"Poison," continued

was found (that's one small piece of paper found in an entire house!!!), showing the purchase of Furadan by a third party. I can almost certainly guarantee this case would have never been prosecuted without that receipt, as that single piece of paper led to an entire series of important witnesses, including the farmer who purchased the Furadan for Halcomb.

Snow also had praise for Officer Jeff Whittinghill, who testified about a similar poisoning incident he investigated in the same general area four years ago.

"Based on CO Whittinghill's testimony the Judge told Halcomb when he imposed the sentence that he was quite sure he had something to do with the previous poisoning incident," wrote Snow.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency toxicologist Dr. Chris Weis testified that Furadan was used in concentrations much greater than those recommended by the manufacturer. That can cause nausea, headaches, vomiting and death in humans who come in contact with the substance, even by touch.

"Thanks to conservation officers Scott McIntosh, Jeff Whittinghill, and everyone else in the 2nd District who assisted with the search warrant in 2007 for a job well done," concluded Snow.

Frass Happens

By Venita Bright
Photos by Mark Marraccini

Last week and currently, we are having the joy of watching the monarch life-cycle play out on the grounds of KDFWR headquarters.

Information and Education Assistant Director Laura Burford and many of the staff are learning a little more about this beautiful insect. Laura watched as one of the caterpillars became a chrysalis! Here are a few photos we would like to share with you.

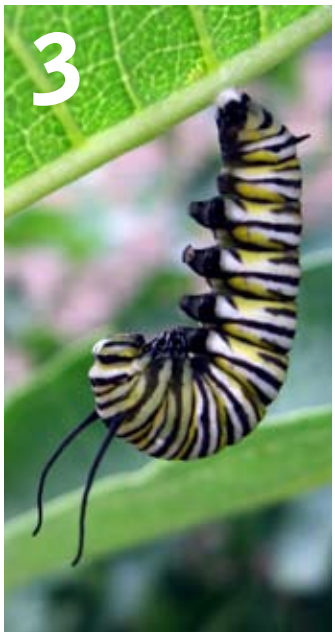
5. After about two weeks the exoskeleton splits again and the adult butterfly backs out of it. The wings unfold. The butterfly then pumps a fluid from its abdomen through the wings causing them to stiffen. Then it tests the wings with a quick flutter to check their dryness. This process takes about two hours.

The adult Monarch butterfly is then ready to fly – south to Mexico to avoid Kentucky's winter.

1. Here is a "young caterpillar" feeding on its host plant - milkweed. Young start out much more tiny than this one (about 1/2 inch in length).

4. When molting begins, the caterpillar's exoskeleton splits at the "shoulder blade" area and is shed. The pupa, or chrysalis, emerges wearing its new pale green, gold-flecked exoskeleton. This process takes about 2 minutes! The chrysalis darkens as it ages and the day before it emerges, the orange and black wings of the monarch butterfly become visible.

2. This one is an "older caterpillar." You can tell by the size - this one is big! Caterpillars store energy in the form of fat to carry them through the non-feeding pupa stage. The larva stage lasts about two weeks and during that time, the size increases tremendously (to over 2 inches in length) from constant feeding and converting nutrients to fat.



3. Here is a "caterpillar preparing for chrysalis." Notice the silk pad the caterpillar spins at its rear to attach itself upside down to the milkweed leaf. It hangs upside down in this J-shape until it molts several hours (maybe a day?) later.

Everyone's first stop at the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife

The origin of this stop sign is revealed. *Charlie Baglan photo*

By Charlie Baglan and John Akers

You may never have noticed it, but at the Fisheries Annex there's a ramp that leads up the side to two yellow doors – public restrooms.

Glance over next time you're at that stop sign as you're pulling into headquarters from US 60. For scads of people 30 years ago, this building was known as The Museum.

A precursor to modern-day Salato, this facility featured fish mounts of the state's popular species along with mounts of birds of prey, songbirds and game birds. This was a *must see* on Frankfort's exceedingly short *must do* list.

For fish'torians and folks just coming to the lakes to wet a line, this was a great place to go.

While the museum is now closed, the restrooms are still very much open for business. Because they are, the Fisheries Annex has remained a very good place to stop (and go). And it's been officially designated as such with a shiny red stop sign. Odd though, there is no cross traffic that would prevent a car from simply proceeding straight, or is there?

You notice it in NASCAR, after a pit stop, you're ready to race. The same applies to fishing.

A rambunctious little boy, after finishing *his business*, was eager to get back to the business of catching bluegill at the lower lake. It was a typical summer work day in 1991. As the lad scampered down the ramp, he swung through the railing at the bottom onto the roadway and into the path of an oncoming car.

Without a stop sign, the child caught the motorist by complete surprise.

Enough eyes witnessed the incident that word spread quickly to the Game Farm Superintendent, a fellow we better remember as wildlife disease specialist Danny Watson, and then up to the front office.

Fortunately, the lad wasn't hit, but Watson led the effort for an urgent new project: Erect a stop sign.

Salato has replaced the museum of wall mounts and the 1950s-style roadside zoo that featured chain link cages with bears, wolves, and a noisy ol' peacock. Traffic here at Fish & Wildlife Headquarters has picked up quite a bit in recent years, but still you see little congestion. Prior to the stop signs and speed bumps, the road now known as Sportsman's Lane was more like Sportsman's Speedway. So, perhaps, some traffic control measures were in order.

After all these years of tapping my brake every time I ease up to that first stop sign coming in from Louisville Road, I look over to that pair of doors, that ramp, those handrails, and I think about that kid and what could have happened.

Those bars look like a playground, especially if you're 10 with newfound exuberance because you're no longer about to pop. Sometimes rules seem as arbitrary as fish in a pond. Other times, they run a little deeper. Maybe this tale is trivial, but it's one that should be told while there's a few still left to pass it on.

Put that in your museum.

It is hoped that this will inspire other odd tales of interest to us all before their origins are long forgotten. Sad, when our people retire, so do our stories.